

VZCZCXRO6710
OO RUEHBC RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHPW RUEHTRO
DE RUEHIL #0450 0611308
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 021308Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1693
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 9076
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 3888
RUEHIC/OIC COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 000450

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UN](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN WED TO "DEFAMATION OF RELIGION" LANGUAGE
IN THE UNHRC

REF: A) STATE 18282 B) ISLAMABAD 433

Classified By: Political Counselor Candace Putnam for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[11](#). (C) Summary: In response to reftel demarche announcing
USG participation as an observer in the UN Human Rights
Council (UNHRC) (ref a), Imran Siddique, Director of UN
Affairs in Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs told
DepPolCouns February 28 Pakistan remains committed to
language on "Defamation of Religion" as part of an operative
document for the UNHRC. End Summary.

[12](#). (C) Siddique received the demarche February 27 (ref b)
which also contains USG redlines for any deliberations in
Geneva on an operative text. On February 28, he told
DepPolCouns the government of Pakistan welcomes USG
re-engagement in the UNHRC. Pakistan plans to work in the
UNHRC in a "pragmatic and non-politicized fashion." Siddique
gave as evidence of this policy Pakistan's decision to
address Burma and the DPRK in the UNHRC.

[13](#). (C) Pakistan also welcomed the words of President Obama.
Not only those contained in the demarche on re-engagement but
also the President's overture -- early in his Presidency, to
the Muslim World. It was in this context that Siddique laid
a marker: Pakistan will continue to work to advance language
on "Defamation of Religion." In an oblique reference to the
Danish cartoon affair, Siddique said that as an Islamic
Republic, Pakistan could not ignore the effects "defamation
of religion" could have on the public. Language on the
matter had been agreed by the OIC and Pakistan was wedded to
it. While acknowledging the USG does not share Pakistan's
position on the need for language on "Defamation of
Religion," Siddique asked that the USG take Islamic nations'
views into account.

[14](#). (C) Comment: Pakistan has a long-standing position on
the "Defamation of Religion" issue: the majority of
Pakistan's populace failed to appreciate the USG insistence
in protecting free speech in the face of media that are seen
as insults to Islam. Siddique said he, personally,
negotiated "Defamation of Religion" language for Pakistan,
but underscored that support for the language is GOP policy.
Siddique was to have traveled to Geneva the weekend of
February 28 to join Pakistan's delegation to the UNHRC.
PATTERSON